613 range. The rule of exogamy, and the sense of close kinship which bound members of a lineage meant that the local subcaste group of the kara (whether this comprised one or more lineages) was divided into a small number of compact groups. At assemblies the members separated out into lineage groupings. Only the legal heads (karanavans) of property-groups attended such assemblies, and within each lineage these tended to defer to each other on the basis of age, spokesmanship being left to the eldest man(also sometimes called a karanavan) of the lineage as a whole.

613 681 Though it owned no property in common, the lineage was in some contexts a corporate group in the sense of having legal responsibility for its members' acts. If some member of a lineage broke a caste law, for example by dining or fornicating with a low caste person or failing to pay dues to the temple, his whole lineage was temporarily ostracized by the assembly until it called him to book. [42] His property-group must then pay a fine (prayaschittam) to the assembly and he must go through a rite of purification before his lineage could be readmitted to caste. In cases of grave offence such as fornication with a Paraya woman, his lineage was during British rule ostracized until he had been excommunicated from lineage and caste and his funeral rites performed; during native rule until he had been executed by order of the chief of the king.

613 628 In other ways, the lineage held itself responsible for disputes entered into by its members.

613 Even in the last 50 years, quarrels between men
628 of different lineages, usually over field-boundaries or women, have resulted in prolonged hostility, sometimes with fighting, between their lineages. In South Malabar and Cochin, such hostility between individual lineages could not take the form of actual blood-feuds (kudipaga) such as were known in the politically less centralized area of North Malabar. These were prevented by the strong organization of the village assembly, the power of desavari and naduvari, and the existence of the royal court. Fighting between groups of men of different lineages, as between groups of men of adjacent villages owing allegiance to different and sometimes mutually hostile desavaris, was soon stopped by the appropriate local authority - the desavari in the first case and the naduvari in the second. If however a Nayar were slain by a man of another lineage, his matrilineal kinsmen had the right sanctioned by the king to place his body in the [43] house or the outhouse of his slayer and burn house and coprse together. His lineage might then, after paying a fee to the naduvari, select one of their number to fight a duel to the death with a chosen man of the slayer's lineage in order to avenge the murder. The lineage was thus a corporate group in contexts involving murder and offences against the religious laws of the caste, though the property-group was the corporate group in contexts involving disputes over property.

613 The individual lineage was linked to its local
602 subcastes assembly by the institution of enangar.
621

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
Central Kerala Nayar

lages. The men were often clerks in the palaces. In Cochin, castes two and three were amalgamated and were called Swarupattil Sudra Nayars or "palace servants." 564

Fourth, a caste called Pallichan Nayars, both in Calicut and Cochin. Its members also were vassals in the villages of royalty, chiefs, and of the greater Brahmans. The men were often palanquin bearers as well as soldiers.

Fifth, a caste called Sudra Nayars in Calicut and Illath ("Brahman house") Sudras in Cochin. The members lived in villages owned by Brahman families or on the estates of Brahmanical temples.

The mutual ritual ranking of these five castes seems to have varied in different districts. In some districts they ranked in the order given, and men of a higher caste might marry women of a lower caste; the reverse was in theory forbidden. In other districts the castes seem to have disputed for precedence and not to have regularly intermarried. In most areas the five castes occupied different villages or different sections of large villages, seem to have had little communication in peacetime, and did not normally interdine. In war, however, soldiers of these different castes interdined freely and spent the night in each others' homes. It is possible that sexual restrictions between these castes were also relaxed in war, but this point is uncertain. 564 554 [628] [726]

In each village there were normally some four to seven matrilineages of the appropriate retainer caste. The separate households or property groups within each lineage had the hereditary right, granted by the king, to occupy stretches of garden land and to lease large plots of wet paddy land on long-term tenure from the village landlord. The tenure was called *kānam;* the tenant, *a kānakkaran.* In most villages the men of retainer lineages also owed military service to their landlord, ultimately on behalf of the king. (The military organization is discussed below.) Retainers were called *adiyar,* a word equivalent to "vassals," of their landlord. They participated in his household ceremonies and often waited upon him. Women of retainer lineages could be summoned as serving maids in the landlord's family; men, as bailiffs to collect the landlord's rents and organize the labor of his serfs. 621 613 564 566 471 427

The Temple-Servant Castes In addition to the Nayars, other aristocratic castes often lived in a village. These were the temple servants, nowadays collectively called Ambalavasis. They are relevant to our discussion because they sometimes married Nayar women. The highest of these castes were the Chakkyars (or reciters of Puranic stories) and the Pushpagans (or flower gatherers for temples), which had patrilineal descent systems of the same type as the Nambudiris. They 564 794

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

627 Murder among the Nayars
613 sometimes led to blood feuds between lineages (*ibid.*, I: 195–196).
● 628 Chiefs could usually cut short a feud between commoner lineages, but even these feuds occasionally ran their course for a generation, although cognatic and affinal ties between lineages helped to bring them to a close. Greater feuds were sometimes waged between the lineages of village headmen or chiefs of adjacent districts, in which the commoner Nayars of each area might participate.

Matrilineal Units

614 564 THE CLAN

Among Nambiar commoners the largest matrilineal unit was the clan (*vamsham* or *illam*). It had the functions of exogamy and mutual hospitality. Common descent was merely stipulated and not demonstrated and the order of segmentation within the clan was unknown. [635] The clan might be dispersed throughout a kingdom or even, perhaps, between kingdoms. Its members might point to a particular village as their original ancestral site, but each clan seems to have been much older and its history less clearly documented than among Nayar retainers in Central Kerela. There is no doubt that clans became much more dispersed in the nineteenth century than they had traditionally been because of the development of new areas of cultivation and increased mobility between villages. However, even traditionally the clan seems to have had more members and a wider spread than in the Central area. Its characteristics may be attributed to several factors. First, Nambiars were not divided into separate retainer castes. Thus, although the majority of commoner marriages were within the village, [582] Nambiars did have greater freedom to marry and move more freely between villages throughout the realm. Lacking a strong superordinate political structure and internal caste differentiation to give form to their relationships, they had larger kinship units. Newcomers to a village probably did not need to become affiliated to its assembly by order [608] of a superior political authority. Instead, they could probably affiliate themselves with their clan fellows and so at once be provided also with classificatory affines in other clans. Second, Nambiars practised 614 avunculocal residence; husband and wife lived in the husband's 564 matrilineal ancestral house (Buchanan, 1807: 513–514). Sons normally 591 moved back to their own matrilineal homes at puberty, but daughters [425] moved to their husbands' homes. However, Nambiar fathers occasionally gave privately acquired land to their wives and children when they were able. The children might then settle permanently in

The Killing or assault of a Nayar

outside the lineage led to feuds between lineages or between larger territorial units. In Cochin, the king had more power than in Kottayam to curtail such feuds or confine them to organized duels for which a fee must be paid. Minor offences against caste law, such as dining with low caste persons, were tried by the subcaste assembly of the village and resulted in temporary excommunication of the offender's property group and the payment of a fine to the village goddess's temple.

The *kāranavan* had the legal right to punish offences within the property group and also those offences against caste law for which the caste held the property group responsible until justice had been done. Incest and murder within the lineage appear to have been punished by expulsion from the *taravād* by the *kāranavan* and from the caste by the caste assembly. In cases of grave insubordination by a junior member, the *kāranavan* had the right to deny him maintenance or access to the ancestral house until he mended his behavior.

Thus the supernatural agents of the village and the *taravād* primarily acted to force the human authorities to carry out their judicial duties. If, for example, the caste failed to excommunicate the *taravād* of an individual who had sinned against its religious laws, it was believed that the village goddess would strike the village with epidemic, flood, or some such misfortune. Similarly, if incest within the lineage went undetected or unpunished, the lineage ghosts and the patron goddess might cause the offenders to die or might bring misfortune on the *taravād* as a whole.

The fact that any member of the *taravād* may suffer as a result of the misdemeanors of any other, carries into the realm of supernatural sanctions the collective responsibility of the *taravād* in social and legal affairs. If a man breaks a ritual rule of the caste, his whole *taravād* is polluted and liable for excommunication. If a death or birth occurs, the whole lineage is temporarily polluted and excluded from normal social life. At the back of these norms lies the fact that the *taravād* is an economic and legal corporation. Its property is owned jointly, and the *taravād* is responsible for the debts of any one member. Its male members must support each other in feuds against other lineages. It is not surprising that the concept of being members one of another in secular affairs is projected into the realm of mystical retributions.

The points at which supernatural agents might replace, or act instead of, human authorities, appear to have been those where a subordinate was wronged by one who was himself a powerful authority and could manipulate the law. Thus lineage ghosts were probably particularly effective in punishing or setting to rights misdemeanors of the *kāranavan* himself. I am uncertain whether, in traditional law, junior members could sue in court for the deposition of an erring *kāranavan*. They certainly possessed this right in British law, but even so, it was very difficult before 1933 to get rid of a *kāranavan*. The lineage ghosts appear to have provided important sanctions against a *kāranavan's* misdoings, for they brought misfortune on a *taravād* whose *kāranavan* disgraced its reputation for hospitality or squandered its property. I was told that the former custom by which a junior member might be possessed by a ghost and voice its threats to the *taravād* added force to the complaints of young men who were cheated by their *kāranavans*. The fact that only the *kāranavan* may propitiate the lineage ghosts points up both his responsibility to the ghosts to ensure good conduct and prosperity in his *taravād*, and also his responsibility to his juniors to ensure the favor of the ghosts.

I have myself recorded no case in which lineage ghosts were believed to have actually prevented a crime on the part of a *kāranavan*, as distinct from punishing one. V. K.

in the Nāyar case, for in spite of the institution of lineage ghosts there are serious limitations on the expression of aggression within the matrilineage. It is therefore logical to hypothesize that a residuum of unexpressed aggression is displaced outside the lineage toward outgroups and toward supernatural agents which represent these groups. However, there are also, as we shall see, realistic reasons, issuing from the political and economic structures, why individuals should feel aggressive toward outgroups of various categories. It seems probable that the institutions surrounding alien ghosts absorb some of these aggressions as well.

Alien ghosts in the general context of Nāyar handling of aggression. The role-structure of alien ghost cults is that of the wider community, and to understand them we must see how they are interwoven with political and economic relationships between lineages and between castes. For political and economic factors limit both the form and the direction which the expression of aggression can legitimately take in these various relationships.

Within the lineage, as I have suggested, the Nāyars' aggression training permits them to acknowledge to themselves a certain degree of hostility in their relations with matrilineal kin. It does not, however, permit physical aggression between matrilineal kin, nor does it permit the expression of projected aggression in the form of accusations of witchcraft or sorcery between matrilineal kin. For the *taravād* is the smallest corporate unit in Nāyar society. Its members are bound by the closest ties of economic cooperation. They must present a united front to the world, and such forms of aggression would be incompatible with the smooth functioning of their group. A degree of aggression can, however, be safely projected outside the *taravād* on to lineage ghosts, whose cult, as we have seen, actually strengthens the solidary bonds between living matrilineal kin.

Turning to wider relationships within the Nāyar caste, we must note that the political organization traditionally permitted the open expression of organized physical aggression against peers outside the lineage, in controlled feuds between lineages of the same village, villages of the same chiefdom, and chiefdoms of the same kingdom, and in warfare between kingdoms. Such physical aggression within the caste was possible because the internal organization of the caste was segmentary. Conflicts within it therefore balanced each other. Lineages opposed each other within the village but combined against other villages. Villages opposed each other within the chiefdom but combined against other chiefdoms. Chiefdoms opposed each other within the kingdom but combined against other kingdoms in war.

In this system, the most severe limits on intersegment conflict were those on feuds within a village. Such feuds arose in response to grave disputes—often, it appears, involving charges against a Nāyar woman of immorality with a low caste man. But, particularly in Cochin, these feuds were of short duration. They were controlled and curtailed by the authority of village headman and district chief. Hence interlineage disputes were limited in their mode of expression. Moreover, it was possible for individuals of different lineages to quarrel, yet to be unable to persuade their *kāranavans* and the rest of their lineages to enter a feud with them. It is here that suspicions of sorcery came into play, chiefly through beliefs in the use of hired sorcerers who controlled alien ghosts. Affines were particularly suspect, for, outside the lineage, affines were the persons with whom one had closest relationships and with whom disputes could most easily arise. If, for example, a *kāranavan* seemed particularly fond of a

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

582 was made on page 83, where it was said that a woman
564 of any clan of North Malabar may not consort with a
184 man of the same clan name belonging to South Malabar. Following this principle, the man may do so. A woman of South Malabar (inferior), mating with a man of her own clan name of North Malabar (superior), would be following anulômam; but a woman of North Malabar cannot, under pain of being guilty of pratilômam, mate with a man of her own clan name of South Malabar.
564 Alliances between the people of North Malabar and
484 South Malabar seem to be extremely rare; partly, per-
784 haps, because of this custom which is all compulsive, partly because the Nâyar women of North Malabar
[628] cannot cross the river which marks the boundary between the two. Nor, as said before, can the Nâyar women of Chirakkal, the northern-most portion of Malabar, cross the river which lies between it and South Canara to the northward. Thus, they cannot go beyond their northern or southern boundaries. The origin of this interdiction to cross the river southwards has been explained to me as emanating from a command of the Kólattiri Rajah in days gone by, when, the Arabs having come to the country about Calicut (South Malabar), there was a chance of the women being seized and taken as wives. An explanation which is somewhat fanciful. The prohibition to cross the river to the northwards is supposed to have originated in much the same way, but I have not
564 noted precisely what it is. Again, men of the Kurup clan of Katattanâd may mate with women of the
582 Nambiyâr clan who live in Kôttayam, but they may not mate with women of the Nambiyâr clan living in Chirakkal. The custom imputing superiority or inferiority to those of a clan inhabiting a certain locality is obscure; it has its counterpart elsewhere in Malabar.

793 "Except the Nambûtiri, the Nâyar has no other priestly, spiritual or religious instructor; and it is for the
564 gratification of this Bhú-dévan (earth god) that the Sûdra woman, if she has any religious instruction at all, is taught that she was created." We have heard what Hamilton has said about this (see Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I). Though the first portion of this statement is not quite accurate, for we have seen that the priests and religious instructors of the Nâyars are not admitted to be, strictly speaking, Nambûtiris, yet on the whole it is not far wrong, as the Nambûtiri is esteemed as a very exalted person, and he may ply his music among the Nâyar ladies without very much restriction. As remarked before, the

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambûdiris and rulers on the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even today Nayars remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambûdiri *genitors*, and boast that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

Part II. The Nayar *Tali*-Rite in North Malabar

North Malabar lies north of the Kora River, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri, Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges, usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys. This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1792 approach the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was never consolidated as was the Zomorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *nâduvaris* fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within the *nâd*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars were Nambiars, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*, appointed by the Raja or the *nâduvari*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged to the same sub-caste as other Nambiars. In most villages the land was divided between the Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south. *Nâduvari* lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived, employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves Samantan Nambiars. Nambûdiri Brahmans are fewer in the north than in the south, especially since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore. Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

The Nayar Kinship System. North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage his *tarawâd* property under the direction of his *kâranavan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *kâranavan* and her father, often to the *kâranavan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned her to her lineage. The *genitor* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

except to cease to function, and to divide the *tarwad* property among individual members. Theoretically the loss of the elements *A*, *B*, *C* and *D* marks the end of the *tarwad* institution. Nevertheless, the *tarwad* is still conceptualized as a distinctive social and ceremonial group by the element *E*, in spite of the loss of all other elements.

In 1956 (March-June) when I studied the Nayar, most of the *tarwad* in Kerala had already ceased to exist as a functional body. In a large building named *tarwad* where once lived more than fifty members of a matrilineal family, I found only a few members: such as an old mother and her daughter with her husband and children. The members of each *tarwad* were dispersed, forming independent small households each with a spouse and children, having already partitioned the *tarwad* property. Many of the older generation who are aged fifty and the head (father) of the household consisting of an elementary family, were born in a *tarwad*, and had experiences of the *tarwad* life. They are the people who lived through the dramatic stage of the disintegration of the *tarwad*. Their life history itself reflects the great changes in the Nayar matrilineal system.

It is extremely interesting to study through these living members the process, by which the members of a *tarwad* organized on a strict matrilineal principle, without allowing cohabitation of husband and wife, gradually reorganized into many individual elementary families in the course of half a century. The disintegration of the Nayar system as a whole took about two centuries but it seems that the actual disintegration of an individual *tarwad* is about half a century. The following discussion deals with how individual members acted at various stages of the disintegration of the *tarwad;* and what the changes of the matrilineal system actually mean to those individuals who are involved; and what are the consequences of the disintegration of the *tarwad*.

Marayil Tarwad

The *tarwad* which I have chosen for study is named Marayil, and one of the Nayar *tarwad* in Ernaklum, Cochin. This *tarwad* had many advantages for my purposes. The majority of the members of the *tarwad*, who now form many different households, still reside near each other, within the thirty minutes walk. The number of the descendants of the foundress of the *tarwad* amounts to 94 altogether in May 1956, ranging through seven generations. Many *tarwad* were much bigger in numbers, and deeper in generations, than this. Another advantage is that it represents a *tarwad* of a typical upper middle class among the Nayar caste in this area: present occupations of these members are government officials, advocates, teachers, etc. They have very friendly relationships with many other Nayars in this area, and are thought of as respectable people. The husbands, at every generation, are all Nayars, without a single case of a marriage with a Nambudri Brahman, as is common among the upper class Nayar in this area, nor with a Irawa, the caste below the Nayar.

Marayil *tarwad* was founded around 1830. The first partition by which the

[text continues on p. 21]